

programs, guaranteeing that these programs will be there if disabled veterans need them.

I am pleased to report that the bill establishes a program of chiropractic services in each network of VA facilities. It authorizes the VA to employ chiropractors as federal employees as well as to contract for these services. Also, it creates a VA advisory committee on chiropractic health care.

Thank you Chairman Rockefeller, Senator Specter and Senator Daschle, as well as Mr. Filner and Mr. Evans, who worked with me to achieve this compromise for an effective new program of VA chiropractic health care.

Requires VA Secretary to assess special telephone services made available to veterans, such as "help lines" and "hotlines," with a report to Congress.

Provides authority for Secretary to study, then if found feasible, obtain a personal emergency-notification and response system for service-disabled veterans.

Authorizes critically necessary construction project at the Miami, Florida VA Medical Center.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, this bill will improve veterans' health care programs as well as assist the VA's health care personnel to provide quality care to our nation's veterans, especially those most seriously disabled and least able to help themselves.

Veterans of our armed forces deserve a dependable and innovative system of health care and benefits. This bill increases our ability to meet the needs of veterans, who have sacrificed to meet ours.

I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Enhancement Act of 2001, and I want to thank the other Members and staff who have worked hard to finish this bill in the first session of this Congress. I particularly want to recognize my friend, Mr. FILNER of California, and Susan Edgerton and John Bradley, our Staff Directors of the Health Subcommittee, as well as Bill Cahill and Kim Lipsky, professional staff members of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. These and other staff have worked closely with us to achieve this legislation on behalf of America's veterans.

REMOVAL OF MRS. BIGGERT'S
NAME AS CO-SPONSOR OF H.R. 3295

HON. ROBERT W. NEY

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2001

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, the House printing deadline prohibited me from removing the gentlewoman from Illinois, Mrs. Biggert, from the list of co-sponsors of H.R. 3295. Mrs. Biggert's name was added as a cosponsor of H.R. 3295 in error. Had I not been precluded from doing so, I would have taken to the floor to correct this situation and ask unanimous consent that her name be removed from the co-sponsor list.

TRIBUTE TO HOOPS SAGRADO
(SACRED HOOPS)

HON. HAROLD E. FORD, JR.

OF TENNESSEE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 13, 2001

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, once in a while on this floor, we have the privilege to leave politics behind and recognize the outstanding achievements of Americans.

So today I would like to pay tribute to a group of young Americans—very close to my heart—that have become ambassadors of the playground.

In 1999, my friend Bryan Weaver founded a non-profit group named Hoops Sagrado. Hoops Sagrado is a cultural exchange program that is using the game of basketball to help bring a better life to two groups with seemingly little in common, young adults from the urban center that is Washington, DC, and young Mayans from the rural western highlands of Guatemala.

Despite the difference in cultures, the group share a common passion: They both love playing basketball. Hoops Sagrado is named after a Native American belief that all races are connected through the sacred hoops of life, and must live in balance with one another to survive.

These young men and women are doing their part to fulfill what Dr. Martin Luther King said was "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, what are you doing for others?"

For the last two years I have had the great privilege of serving as an honorary chair of the Hoops Sagrado project, and was thus especially pleased to see that last week the Washington Post devoted a Metro Section series to Hoops Sagrado's mission in Guatemala. The series highlighted the hope that Hoops Sagrado brings to these young people from Guatemala and America, a disproportionate portion of whom are raised by single mothers, and touched by the scourge of violence.

With great pride in the achievements of Hoops Sagrado, I urge all Americans to follow their example in touching young people, and review the Washington Post series published during the week of November 25, 2001 and describing how they overcame hardship to build bridges of friendship.

Finally, I would like to thank them and their sponsors Ben Cohen, Phil and Jan Fenty of Fleetfeet, and The National Basketball Association for the important and honest work they did as ambassadors on behalf of this country.

[From the Washington Post, Nov. 25, 2001]

Ambassadors of the Playground

By Sylvia Moreno

Two vans stuffed with tall, gangly teenagers, oversize suitcases and boxes of basketballs wend sluggishly westward from the Guatemala City airport on a muggy summer night, the riders seeing this new world through the prism of the one they just left.

"This looks like Georgetown," says 17-year-old Max Costa as the van he rides in passes a few blocks of small shops and boutiques.

Moments later, whoops and hollers greet the sight of a Wendy's, one of several fast-food restaurants on the outskirts of the capital.

"This looks like the Adams Morgan part of town," Max announces excitedly, as they pass strip malls punctuated with neon signs

and billboards advertising a Burger King and a Domino's Pizza. "That's straight, Joe!"

They get to the ancient and picturesque city of Antigua close to midnight, and as they stroll the historical streets, their minds are fixed on things such as finding a burger or a hip-hop disco. They encounter neither.

They are more than 3,000 miles from home—in body, perhaps, not in spirit. This trip is supposed to show them that there's so much beyond the 'hood, but they're still looking for home.

The ancient colonial arch in Antigua is compared to McDonald's. They it look at stunning examples of centuries-old Spanish architecture and Antonio "Biggie" Dupree, 18, asks:

"Is that a church? That's big, dog!" His friends call him Biggie because he looks like one of their idols, the late rapper Notorious B.I.G.—except Biggie has a baby face and a soft voice.

He walks through a small plaza lined by grand 16th-century ruins—convents and churches toppled in 1773 by an earthquake that forever changed the face of this former Central American capital. But looking at the massive stone walls with small, high-set windows, Biggie says, "Imagine what it would be like to be in one of these Guatemala jails."

A GRAND VISION

That night was the first in a three-week journey to the lush highlands of western Guatemala, a country of spectacular beauty and stark oppression, poverty and hunger. Group members came to play hoops, but they had been told they would do much, much more.

These African American teenagers—nine from the District, two from Montgomery County—were to see some of the country's most cherished sites, take Spanish classes, conduct daily basketball clinics for Mayan children and repair basketball courts for a poor, mountainside school.

They had come as representatives of Hoops Sagrado (Sacred Hoops), a fledgling non-profit group whose leader hoped that such an experience would instill leadership skills and a sense of community service in disadvantaged youths through playing and coaching basketball. For the players, it was a free trip, a chance to get out of Washington, to see things, to enjoy themselves. Their leader had a grander mission in mind.

Bryan Weaver founded Hoops Sagrado in 1996 after his first visit to Guatemala, when he was struck by the role that hardscrabble basketball courts played as social centers of indigenous Mayan villages. He returned in 1999, bringing one of the African American kids whom he coached in youth leagues in Adams Morgan and Columbia Heights. Last year, he brought three. He was convinced that African American and Mayan kids could learn valuable lessons from each other. They are unlike racially, culturally and linguistically, but they face the same problems of bigotry, street violence and relegation to the margins of their societies.

Bryan expected members of his group to grow in self-confidence from coaching kids and to realize that they were not alone with their problems—that others might have even harder lives. And the Mayan youngsters, he figured, would benefit from the court moves his players could teach and be inspired to strive for more in their lives than a sixth-grade education and recycling the meager lives of their parents, grandparents and great-grand parents. To help the Mayan kids, Bryan also started a scholarship program to help keep girls in school past sixth grade, when free public education ends in most indigenous villages, unlike in the cities, which get enough resources to pay for public education through 12th grade.